



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON **VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

Republicans | Ranking Member Phil Roe, M.D.

H.R. 6194: To authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to treat certain programs of education converted to distance learning by reason of emergencies and health-related situations in the same manner as programs of education pursued at educational institutions, and for other purposes.

03/21/2020 Became Public Law No: 116-128

Background:

Many colleges and universities across the United States are temporarily closing campuses and transitioning to online coursework in an effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus. However, under current law, courses must be specifically approved for online learning in order to qualify for GI Bill payments from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Further, student veterans and other GI Bill beneficiaries enrolled in full time online coursework receive a smaller monthly housing rate than those enrolled in traditional coursework. For example, GI Bill students enrolled in *in-person* classes at Stanford University receive a monthly housing allowance of \$4,200 due to the high cost of living in Northern California; yet GI Bill students enrolled in full time *online* classes at Stanford University receive a monthly housing allowance of just \$895.50. Therefore, a veteran, spouse, dependent, or other individual using the GI Bill whose school suddenly closes and requires courses to be completed online because of the COVID-19 pandemic, will stop receiving GI Bill payments (like tuition and fees) altogether unless their course has been approved for online learning. If their course has been approved for online learning, the student will receive a significantly lower monthly housing allowance than the one they have been relying on. This could mean that these students are no longer able to afford their monthly rent, mortgage payments, or other living expenses in the midst of a global crisis. To prevent this, H.R. 6194 would give VA the authority to continue paying GI Bill payments and monthly housing allowances at existing rates for these students.

The Message:

- Student veterans and others relying on the GI Bill to attend college and make ends meet should not be stripped of their benefits because schools move to online classes to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.
- H.R. 6194 is a commonsense fix to safeguard student veterans' earned benefits as they continue to work hard towards an education during the coronavirus pandemic.
- This bill would allow VA to maintain the status quo for veterans and other GI Bill beneficiaries during an unprecedented time of uncertainty.